

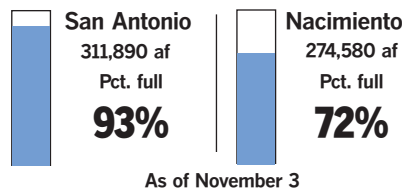
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AG MONDAY

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www.thecalifornian.com

Lake levels



Almanac

Compiled from staff reports

Crop spotlight



n Kale

Year	Acreage	Tons	Total \$
2005	2,002	21,500	\$15.94M
2005 Monterey County rank: 22			

Ag event

The Monterey chapter of the American Institute of Wine and Food will hold a 160th anniversary celebration of Auguste Escoffier from 4 to 7 p.m. Nov. 19 in the Fireside Room of the Highlands Inn, Park Hyatt Carmel

Cost for tickets for "A Reception in Red" ranges from \$75 to \$95, and guests are invited to wear red.

The event benefits the AIWF Scholarship Fund and The Escoffier Foundation.

Reservations: Call Mary Chamberlin at 624-0830.

Jobs in ag



n **POSITION:** Agriculture representative

n **EMPLOYER:** ConAgra Foods
n **DUTIES:** Serve as liaison between ag producers and Gilroy Foods with the purpose of producing contract and open market vegetables for processing.

n **QUALIFICATIONS:** Bachelor's degree in agricultural sciences; three to four years of farming or agricultural field person experience; knowledge of farming operations, ag chemicals and crop cultural practices.

n **CONTACT:** Apply online at www.conagrafoods.com, fax to (402) 930-4512 or e-mail: Tim.VanBuskirk@conagrafoods.com.

Facts and figures

Fresh tomato supplies have improved, and wholesale prices have declined some. Tomatoes had been in short supply earlier in the autumn because of reduced production linked to the July heat wave.

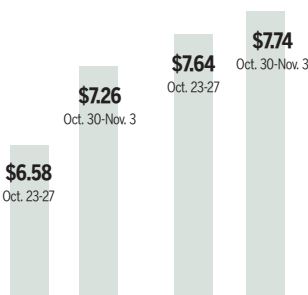
California tomato production now shifts to the southern part of the state, while farms in Central California wind down their harvests.

Supplies of imported tomatoes from Mexico continue to be affected by crop disease that has hurt tomatoes there. Tomatoes grown in Monterey County had a value of more than \$5.6 million in 2005, according to the Monterey County Crop Report.

—"Food and Farm News"

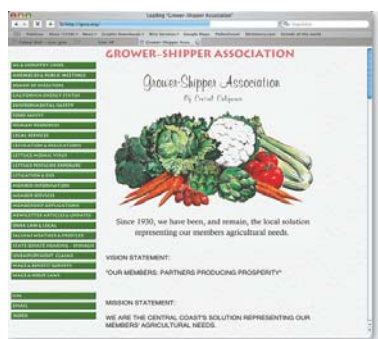
A publication of the California Farm Bureau Federation

Price report



(Average wholesale prices, cartons of 24, shipped from Salinas and Pajaro valleys)

Ag site



n **WHAT:** Grower-Shipper Association of Central California

n **WHERE:** <http://gsva.org/>

n **WHY:** To advocate for the agribusiness industry and provide information.

n **HIGHLIGHTS:** Links to relevant laws and regulations.

PROFILE



RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

Delta Rubber Co. branch manager Froylan Vargas is pictured at the Salinas business on Thursday.

Vargas keeps belts moving

Conveyors are backbone of agriculture business

By JOLI SPENCIER
For The Salinas Californian

Whether it's a processing plant or a vegetable harvesting shed, conveyor belts are needed to move produce down the line. Many different types and sizes are used, depending on the situation. They receive a lot of heavy use, and when they break, someone has to do the repair.

When a fix is needed, the phone may ring at the office of Froylan Vargas, branch manager of Delta Rubber in Salinas.

"They (conveyor belts) are running all the time, and when they are down (growers and processors) are losing money," Vargas said. "They have to get them up and running."

His morning begins with paperwork and billing. He goes over the day's activities, and reviews the previous day's receipts. "After that, the phone starts ringing," he said.

Occasionally the repair need is so specialized that Vargas must send someone from Delta Rubber out to have a look at the problem.

"Basically we are problem solvers," he said. "We can cut and cleat belts to whatever application (growers and processors) need."

Between fabrication, the warehouse, sales and delivery drivers, Vargas has eight employees he supervises.

He said he's a hands-on type of supervisor, who does not isolate himself in an office. He may be found in shipping and receiving or in the back cutting rubber.

JOLI SPENCIER is a Salinas-based freelance writer who specializes in agriculture. Her profiles appear weekly in Ag Monday.

FROYLAN VARGAS

n **AGE:** 38

n **OCCUPATION:** Branch manager of Delta Rubber in Salinas. The company is headquartered in Stockton.

n **WORK:** Villa Trust Co. in Tracy, 1991-1992; Sonitrol Security Systems in Stockton, 1993-1995; Valley Yellow Pages in Stockton, 1996-1997; Delta Rubber in Stockton, 1998-2004; Delta Rubber in Salinas 2004-present;

n **EDUCATION:** Associate of science degree, ITT Technical Institute in Sacramento, 1992

n **PERSONAL:** Originally from Stockton, Vargas has lived in Salinas since 2004. He is working on his bachelor's degree at National University in San Diego.

Great Wine Escape draws near

Celebration of grape harvest brings out the best in the county

Staff report

This weekend offers many opportunities to celebrate Monterey County wines and the vintners and growers whose skill underpins the delightful beverages.

From Thursday through Sunday, the Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association will hold its 10th annual Great Wine Escape Weekend.

As a celebration of the grape harvest, the event brings together winemakers, grape growers, hoteliers, restaurateurs and wine enthusiasts in a variety of settings. The festivities begin Thursday evening with the Vintner's Reserve Opening Reception at the Monterey Plaza Hotel and Spa. This artisan wine affair will feature "A Celebration of Art: In and Out of the Bottle."

A special glass sculpture commemorating the Great Wine Escape's 10th anniversary will be unveiled.

Friday brings Sensory Sensations, a hands-on wine education day, also at the Monterey Plaza

DETAILS

For tickets to Great Wine Escape events, call 375-9400 or visit www.montereywines.org.

Hotel. Seminars abound, and lunch will be served — paired with suitable wines, of course.

Winemaker dinners will be held throughout the county at various restaurants both Friday and Saturday evenings.

On Saturday, Bernardus Lodge in Carmel Valley will offer a seven-course meal paired with six local wines that made the cut in Wine Enthusiast's Top 100 list.

On Saturday, participants are invited to take one of four bus tours or self-guided tours of Monterey County wineries.

Additional wine-tasting will be offered in the afternoon in the Ferrantes Bay View Room atop the Monterey Marriott Hotel.

Sunday, the Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach is the setting for The Great Wine Escape Finale, which features new releases and reserve wines from more than 35 Monterey County wineries.

Special packages combining various events are available.

For information and tickets, call 375-9400 or visit www.montereywines.org.

Growing season draws to a close

As you head south from Salinas on Highway 101 this week, you will see empty fields that not so long ago were densely green with produce. But now all of the lettuce, spinach, broccoli, and cauliflower have been harvested and only the dirt remains.

A few weeks ago you would have seen harvesting rigs spread out across these fields, with their full complement of work crews. But the work along this stretch of farmland has now been completed. Fields are vacant and work crews are moving out of the Salinas Valley toward winter harvest locations in Yuma, Ariz., and the Imperial Valley.

You might see an occasional lone tractor kicking up dirt in a field. The tractor is preparing the soil for next season. Perhaps a cover crop



IN THE FIELDS
Joli Spencer

will be planted in that field. To see any other field activities, you'll have to drive farther south. There you'll find green fields after you reach Gonzales, with crops of lettuce, broccoli, and cauliflower. In these fields, harvesting is ongoing. Crews must finish up the work by Thanksgiving.

You may notice some flail mowing of the broccoli. After the final picking of the crop, a type of giant trower moves over the field cutting off the tops of the plants. You'll be able to recognize when

this has occurred. The field takes on a shaved-head type of appearance. Short stalks of broccoli stems of an even height stick up out of the ground.

After the flail mowing is finished, a tractor comes along pulling a series of blades, which turn up the soil and deposit the remainder of the crop back into the ground. This process supplements the soil and helps protect the next crop from disease.

You will also see some cover crops, planted to replenish the soil. Produce is grown in rows, but with a cover crop, the seed has been scattered across the entire field. Some cover crops look like grasses. Others are more bushy in appearance.

Asparagus is still growing in some fields along the highway.

Before harvest, it's easy to spot asparagus by the fluffy tops of the plant. From the road the field takes on a lumpy appearance. Asparagus remains in the ground for several years, as do perennial artichokes.

Farther south, vineyards appear. The grapes have been picked, but the vines remain.

You might notice trailers parked along the roadside. The equipment being used in that field will soon be needed in the next growing region. As soon as it is no longer needed here, it will be loaded up and moved. Trucks hauling equipment may also be seen along this section of highway.

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